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Information about the Ravalli County Subdivision Regulation Revision Project

What are subdivision regulations?

Subdivision regulations are an important way of guiding the effects and appearance of new development. Subdivision regulations provide standards and a set of procedures for dividing land into separate parcels. By regulating the division of land, regulations provide a method for assuring minimum public safety and amenity standards. They are a combination of both locally defined and State-required regulations. State statutes require that each Montana county, city and town adopt subdivision regulations. Ravalli County's subdivision regulations only pertain to land within the unincorporated areas of the County.

Why is the County revising its subdivision regulations?

In December of 2008, the Board of County Commissioners asked the Planning Department to make updates to the existing subdivision regulations a high priority. Commissioners, Planning Board members, and Planning Staff had heard from many people that the design guidelines, originally adopted in 2000, needed to be updated to reflect current design practices appropriate for the Bitterroot Valley. Additionally, the state legislature convened in 2009, and the County will need to incorporate any changes made by the legislature to Montana Law. This project will not create more regulation, but simply update existing development guidelines.

How do these revisions affect my ability to subdivide?

Subdividers in Ravalli County have been subject to subdivision regulations since the early 1970s. The updates to these development guidelines will ensure that new subdivisions (proposed by you or your neighbors) will be designed in accordance with the most current standards and best practices available. Until the revised regulations are adopted by the Commissioners, proposed subdivisions will be reviewed by the existing, adopted regulations.

What is the timeline for the completion of this project?

While the project timeline is flexible, the Planning Department's assessment of the scope of the project indicates that a final draft of the revised subdivision regulations will appear before the Commissioners in early to mid-2010. The Planning Department must ensure that the initial draft, and ultimately the final version, of the revised subdivision regulations (which will be reviewed during a public hearing process) are of the best possible quality and appropriateness for Ravalli County.

What is the public process and how can I get involved?

There will be multiple opportunities for public involvement. The Planning Department is organizing an Open House event scheduled for June 13, 2009, during which local citizens will be asked to provide input that will be utilized to help diagnose the County's current version of the subdivision regulations. Additional comment opportunities will occur once a draft set of regulations is publicized. Individuals wishing to comment on the draft regulations are encouraged to review the draft and submit substantive comments. This written comment period will take place with each new draft issuance. Finally, the public will be invited to provide comments on the document during the public hearing process before the Planning Board and Board of Commissioners.

It is the goal of the Planning Staff to ensure full and fair participation of all interested parties during the revision period. Throughout, the Planning Department will provide public notification in an effort to keep all interested parties up-to-date with progress and deadlines associated with the project. You can access updated information on the Planning Department's website at: <http://www.ravalliacounty.mt.gov/planning/SRR.htm>.

Are subdivision regulations different from other planning documents?

Yes. Subdivision regulations only apply when land is proposed to be divided. Subdivision regulations require an accurate drawing of new property lines on a document called a "plat." They facilitate the conversion of a single property into two or more separate parcels. Subdivision regulations do not regulate the use of the land divided, nor do they prescribe construction standards for structures built upon the new parcels.